ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGIES FOR THE UK

How can we minimise poverty in every age group across the four nations of the UK?

Overview

The UK has had a number of anti-poverty strategies in recent years, often focusing on particular groups, like children or pensioners, or with a specific geographic scope.

However, what they have all lacked is an evidence-based link between the policies or actions suggested and how they interact with each other to deliver the outcomes sought. Strategies also never set out a compelling vision of what a poverty-free UK would be like and rarely take a lifecourse, dynamic approach to the issues. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has repeatedly criticised such strategies on these grounds, so we are grasping the nettle by asking what it would take to create an evidenced, costed, all-age strategy to reduce poverty across the UK.

What do we mean by poverty?

Our starting definition is that poverty is when an individual’s (mainly material) resources are not sufficient to meet their needs (including participation). Resources include directly-controlled financial resources such as income, financial assets or material goods. But in-kind goods and services are important too (health, education, passported benefits and so on). Informal resources, such as grants or informal childcare, need to be taken account of as well. The ‘needs’ that matter for poverty are those requiring some level of material resources – but this includes a minimum necessary level of social participation, relative to society’s norms.

Aims

The main aim of the programme is to produce evidenced anti-poverty strategies covering all age groups and for each nation of the UK.
We want policy-makers and our stakeholders to use the outputs we develop to inform national and local anti-poverty strategies.

We intend to encourage a debate, based on the evidence, among poverty stakeholders about what a low-poverty UK would really be like.

We aim to assess and strengthen the political consensus on how to reduce poverty.

We will complement the research we are commissioning for this programme with a range of other activities, including seminars, political and public events, all the while working closely with people with direct experience of poverty to ground our efforts.

**What have we done so far?**

We have commissioned a range of evidence and policy reviews to better understand the existing body of knowledge on issues influencing poverty. Each of these 33 reviews examines the links between poverty and a specific policy area, and in particular looks for evidence about effective solutions in policy and practice.

The reviews are arranged into five loose groupings that matter for poverty:

1. Money and the cost of living
2. Complex needs
3. Welfare and work
4. Family, community and education
5. The bigger picture

As well as the reviews, a number of other activities are also on-going:

- A collection of essays written by authors from across the ideological spectrum on their visions for a poverty-free UK published by Prospect Magazine in November.
- In May 2013, a workshop was held with Cambridge University where stakeholders identified 100 research questions we need to
answer to better tackle poverty. This led to an open access paper in the *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*.

- Seminars held by Demos, Social Market Foundation, National Institute of Economic and Social Research and the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships at the University of Edinburgh. These are bringing together relevant policymakers, academics and practitioners to discuss solutions to poverty.

- A panel of people with direct experience of poverty, assembled by the Poverty Alliance, will assess ideas to help ensure solutions respond to the concerns of those affected by poverty.

**Forthcoming work up to 2016**

We will commission a series of theoretical reviews looking at how the disciplines of Economics, Sociology/Social Policy, Philosophy and Psychology can contribute to our understanding of poverty.

During 2014, we will begin to draw together the findings from the evidence and policy reviews, as well as from the various other projects, into a set of strategies to tackle poverty. To help us conceptualise how different policies and interventions interact, we will attempt to build a model of the ‘system’ of poverty. This will provide the foundation for our development of effective, as well as cost-effective, anti-poverty strategies.

Throughout this process we will work together with our Task Group, made up of representatives from academia, think tanks and organisations working in poverty-related areas, to help us conceptualise the interactions between different areas and think through policy options. The programme will also be informed by the strategic guidance of a wider programme advisory group consisting of stakeholders across relevant areas.

The strategy for the UK will be published at the end of 2015. Separate strategies for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will follow in 2016.

**Chris Goulden Head of Poverty, JRF**

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Biography

Chris Goulden manages the poverty team in the Policy and Research Department at JRF. He leads the Anti-poverty strategy research programme and joined JRF in 2003. Chris used to manage and conduct social research on drugs and crime at the Home Office and helped develop the alcohol harm reduction strategy at the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit in the Cabinet Office. Before that, he worked in the NHS in West London and Bradford doing clinical and action research on cancer.

Chris has a master's degree in social research methods from London South Bank University and has been a member of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills Policy Expert Group and of the Social Research Association board. He joined the Social Security Advisory Committee in January 2013.